

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 4328

EXDIS

LONDON FOR SAUNDERS

PARIS FOR MOOSE

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, MO, MR, SS, AG
SUBJ: MOROCCAN REACTION TO MAURITANIAN COUP (III)

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 1982, B. NOUAKCHOTT 1981, C. NOUAKCHOTT 1967,
D. RABAT 4265, E. RABAT 4235

1. SIGNS OF MOROCCAN UNCERTAINTY OVER THE NEW GOVERN-
MENT IN NOUAKCHOTT CONTINUE TO SURFACE. WHILE PRO-
GOVERNMENT PRESS COVERAGE HAS REMAINED FAVORABLE
TOWARD THE NEW MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT, THE OPPOSITION
SOCIALIST PRESS HAS OPENLY QUESTIONED WHETHER NOUAKCHOTT
IS READY TO MAKE DANGEROUS CONCESSIONS CONCERNING THE
WESTERN SAHARA TO ACHIEVE PEACE. IN PRIVATE, NOT
ONLY SOCIALIST USFP NOTABLES BUT KEY OFFICIALS BE-
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LONGING TO THE ISTIQLAL PARTY HAVE EPXRESSED SERIOUS
CONCERN ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF MAURITANIA'S NEW
LEADERS. THE ABSENCE OF REFLECTION OF THIS CONCERN
IN THE ISTIQLAL PRESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE
PARTY'S DELICATE SITUATION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WITH
PARTY LEADER BOUCETTA HOLDING THE FONAFF PORTFOLIO.

2. MEANWHILE, ONE DIPLOMATIC SOURCE, TUNISIAN AMB KHIBI, TOLD AMBASSADOR JULY 17 THAT HIGH-LEVEL MOROCCANS HE HAD SEEN RECENTLY DURING FAREWELL CALLS HAD BEEN "EXTREMELY PREOCCUPIED" REGARDING MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS, DESPITE OFFICIAL MAURITANIAN PRONOUNCEMENTS STRESSING DESIRE TO CONTINUE BILATERAL CO-OPERATION. KLBI'S PERSONAL ASSESSMENT WAS THAT IF THINGS BEGAN TO GO WRONG MOROCCO WOULD NOT HESITATE TO USE ITS 10,000 TROOPS IN MAURITANIA TO SET THINGS RIGHT. NEVERTHELESS, KLBI ARGUED THAT THE MOROCCANS HAD RECEIVED FIRM ASSURANCES FROM NOUAKCHOTT THAT MAURITANIA WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE ON ITS OWN WITH ALGERIA OR THE POLISARIO. ACCORDING TO THE TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR, WITH MOROCCAN CONCURRENCE MAURITANIA MIGHT EXPLORE AT THE KHARTOUM OAU SUMMIT THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING ON THE SAHARA WITHOUT ANY PRE-CONDITIONS, WITH CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT MOROCCO WOULD BE INVOLVED IN ANY RESULTANT DISCUSSIONS. KLBI BELIEVED THAT THIS SCENARIO HAD BEEN AGREED UPON DURING THE JULY 14-15 VISIT OF MAURITANIAN FONMIN LAGHDAF TO RABAT.

3. COMMENT: SCENARIO DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 ABOVE SUPPORTS NOUAKCHOTT REPORT OF HASSAN-LAGHDAF MEETING (REFTEL B) AND MAY REFLECT THE SAHARAN FORMULA FOR WHICH THE NEW MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GROPING (REFTEL C).
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